Second Thought is Beſt.

An OPERA

OF

TWO ACTS,

Performed at the

THEATRE ROYAL in DRURY-LANE.

ADDRESSED TO

R. B. SHERIDAN, Eſq;

By J. HOUGH, of the Inner-Temple,

In which is introduced the

Song rejected by the Lord Chamberlain.

Publiſhed by Mr. MURRAY, Bookſeller, No. 32, Fleet-Street; and of Mr. GREENLAW, Bookſeller, in Cockſpur-Street, Charing-Croſs.

M, DCC, LXXXVIII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

R. B. SHERIDAN, Eſq.

Acting Manager of Drury-Lane Theatre.

WHILE the Public confeſs your ſuperior abilities as an Author, permit me to record your friendſhip and politeneſs as Manager.

It muſt be a pleaſing reflection to men of genius, that the management of the Theatre is in your hands.

There was a Time, when, without intereſt, Shakeſpear would have wrote in vain: That ſeaſon of abſurdity is paſt, and merit now, without the ſanction of his Grace, or Lordſhip, can find its way to the Stage.

You ſoar too high for Envy's ſhaft to reach; and while others, with unremitting aſſiduity, are ſcarce able to ſupply the Town with a ſmall repaſt; you, Sir, with the utmoſt facility, can furniſh unbounded luxuries.

The AUTHOR.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MORLEY,	*Mr. Vernon.*
WOUDBE,	*Mr. Banniſter.*
FRANKLY,	*Mr. Aickin.*
JINGLE,	*Mr. Dodd.*
O'DONAVAN,	*Mr. Moody.*
CONRAD,	*Mr. Baddeley.*
MATILDA,	*Mrs. Baddeley.*
AGNES,	*Mrs. Wrighten.*

SECOND THOUGHT is BEST.

ACT I.

Scene, a Room in Woudbe's Houſe.

Enter Agnes.

IN what a melancholy ſituation is my poor miſtreſs. Well! if ſuch perplexities and diſappointments are the attendants on wealth, Heaven keep me poor, and in a ſtate of ſervitude.

Enter Conrad.

Con. As the attendant on her whom my maſter deifys, I kiſs your hand: A good morning to you, if you have not dined, Mrs. Agnes: What a world of irregularity are you guilty of, in this antique family of yours.

Agn. Irregularity, Mr. Conrad?

Con. Should you play at the game of matrimony, as you do on my words, you'll make an excellent partner, I promiſe you.

Agn. Explain yourſelf, Mr. Conrad.

Con. If you never enjoin me to a more difficult taſk, I ſhall be ever ready to oblige you. Your attention, Mrs. Agnes, if you pleaſe; for, as like

you,

you, I am happy in the organs of ſpeech, I wiſh to explain myſelf by words: And now——

Agn. For the irregularity.

Con. You dine,— for to mention breakfaſt is needleſs, it is a meal you ſeldom trouble your teeth with, in the office of maſtication; but, if on ſome extraordinary occaſion, you indulge that repaſt, you take it at ſuch an unſeaſonable hour, that daylight bluſhes to look on you.—Thus much for digreſſion; but to revert to dinner.

Agn. With leſs prolixity. if you pleaſe.

Con. You dine at the hour of——the very idea creates ſuch an antidote to eating, that, with your leave, we'll paſs it over in ſilence. Supper, in conformity to ancient uſage, is a ſubſtantial meal, to which in the true ſpirit of œconomy, you ſit down by the light of nature, and retire to partake of a comfortable ſerenade, on that wind inſtrument the noſe, at the preciſe time that perſons of polite life enter on the enjoyment of ſociety.

Agn. A very ſublime piece of oratory, truly; you have an excellent tongue, and well underſtand the uſe of it. So, Sir, from your definition of an irregular family, I find a regular one, turns night into day, and reverſes the whole œconomy and deſign of Nature. If Mr. Morley is that character, Heaven ſhield my lady from ſuch a huſband.

Con.

Con. A truce, Mrs. Agnes, if you pleaſe; I meant not to offend and prejudice you, either againſt myſelf, or the perſon of my maſter, who for ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, and perſonal merit, hath no compeer; to mention my own qualifications is needleſs; you have eyes to ſee, and judgement to diſtinguiſh.

Agn. During Mr. Morley's abſence, Sir Rowland has been very ſolicitous to accommodate the family controverſy, in the marriage of Miſs Woudbe with Mr. Baſil; and ſince the laſt conference, our old Argus has laid an embargo on all letters, until he has inſpected the ſuperſcription; and againſt you, and the perſon of your maſter, are theſe once friendly doors forbidden to be opened.—How then did you obtain admittance?

Con. The beſt way in the world; his Majeſty's picture ſet in gold, is the maſter key to every lock in the houſe. This letter, [*Gives a letter.*] for ſo far I am privy to my maſter's ſecrets, contains matter of importance; to recommend caution in the delivery, would be to ſuſpect your prudence: It requires an anſwer. At duſky eve I'll repair to my old ſtation, and wait to receive a letter for my maſter. In the mean time, prepare Miſs Matilda for every event: If an elopement ſhould be thought expedient, arm her with reſolution

for the enterprize: But above all, remember, we have nothing ſo much to fear, as lukewarm friendſhip in the hour of trial. [*Attempts to go.*

Agn. Stay, ſtay, Mr. Conrad; have you no recollection of a promiſe, made the evening before your late journey to London?

Con. I underſtand you. [*Takes a paper out of his pocket.*] This ſong, you muſt know, was written for a convivial meeting, by the arch patriot Duplex, who with one hand affects to ſupport liberty and property, while with the other he ſheaths his poignard in the vitals of the conſtitution.

Song, by Conrad.

The nation is in ruin, Sir,
The nation is in ruin, Sir;
I rave! I ſwear! Aghaſt I ſtare!
To ſee ſuch miſchief brewing, Sir.

II.

The conſtitution is at ſtake,
The conſtitution is at ſtake;
The ſtorm is near; I quake for fear!
The pillars at their centre ſhake.

III.

For Britain's ſafety, night and day,
For Britain's ſafety, night and day,
I grieve, I pine, (ſuch ſorrow's mine)
And ſometimes faſt, and ſometimes pray

IV.

IV.

Then let us loud our voices raiſe,
Then let us loud our voices raiſe,
And do our beſt, and leave the reſt
To wiſer heads, and better days.

Agn. Retire immediately; I hear the footſteps of my maſter. [*Exit Conrad.*] There is a certain ſomething in Mr. Conrad prodigiouſly pleaſing: His addreſs ſo genteel, and his converſation ſo entertaining, that I am almoſt perſuaded to reward his love, and beſtow my perſon upon him. But what apology ſhall I make to Mr. Velveret, to whom I am partly engaged already: Let me ſee, the truth is the beſt apology, and tho' an exotic to almoſt every polite and faſhionable family, with very little culture will grow in every ſoil. [*Exit.*

Enter Woudbe and Frankly.

Frank. My ſilence on this occaſion would be criminal. Can I behold my niece, the daughter of an amiable, but deceaſed ſiſter, deſtined to the arms of one, who has not a virtue to recommend him, and not complain.

Woud. Infatuation hath taken place of reaſon, and the infection becomes general: Not a virtue; can the only ſon of Sir Rowland Baſil, a baronet with five thouſand pounds a year, want virtues to recommend him. Go to, you are precipitate, and cenſure raſhly, brother.

Frank. To form an opinion of men, agreeable to your rule, a rule that ſhall never influence my judgment, we muſt have recourſe to their rentals, and as they ſtand, free or encumbered, we are to eſtimate their merit: The true ſituation of moſt eſtates, are as little underſtood, as the virtues of their owners; and when known, the fee ſimple of both, would not pay the expence of a modern conveyance.

Woud. Vice is not confined to circumſtance or ſituation: The man who poſſeſſes but a competence, ſhall have as ſtrong paſſions, as one of ten thouſand pounds a year; and as all men are, more or leſs tainted, it naturally follows, that he who has the beſt eſtate, can beſt ſupport it.

Frank. To advance reaſon to one obſtinately determined, is as vain and ineffectual, as the attempt would be to ſilence echo with ſound. In the laſt will and teſtament of Thomas Frankly, your daughter's great uncle, there is a deviſe of ten thouſand pounds, to be paid her, at the age of twenty one, or day of marriage—without conditions, brother.

Woud. Not without my conſent; if the deviſe is not ſo expreſſed, it is naturally implied; and all bequeſts made to children ſhould be ſo conſtructed. With you gentlemen of the Law, ſenſe, reaſon, and natural inference, have been ſo tortured, they are almoſt become obſolete. I often lament

lament the depravity I obſerve, even in appearance, in the courts of juſtice. Formerly the full flowing wig was in high eſtimation, as an apendage, and gave grace and dignity to the wearer; but now, under a miſerable portion of horſehair, called the wig epitomiſed, is diſplayed that production of Nature, emphatically termed a head of hair: From which I draw this inference, that he who is careleſs of propriety in his external deportment, will in general be found wanting in the balance of underſtanding.

Frank. When we trace the deformity of others, our opticks are as keen as the eagle's; but when we examine our own defects, our perceptions are as dark as the mole's.

Woud. Every man, ſays the Author of Shandy, has his hobby-horſe. The ſuperanuated debauchee becomes a dupe to his own imbecility; and with a prayer book in his hand, makes an oblation to Venus, that the merit of one, may expiate for the offence of the other.—The ſpendthrift, to evidence his contempt for money, adopts that conduct, which ſoon diveſts him of the cumberous load, and never finds reflection, till he meets it in a priſon. — The trader, by care and induſtry raiſed to the ſtandard of credit, no ſooner begins to experience the pleaſures of plenty, than he affects the follies of the man of faſhion, and ſinks into diſſipation;

diſſipation: Reflection finds him, but not till he finds himſelf in the Gazette. Law, Phyſic, and Divinity, are not exempt; all, on a diligent inveſtigation, will be found to have their hobby-horſe.

Frank. Under the term all, you muſt neceſſarily include yourſelf; I ſhould be glad to know the hobby-horſe of one, ſo diſtinguiſhed for mediocrity.

Woud. Ambition, to be the ſtock of an illuſtrious progeny, and that the eſcutcheon of the Woudbe family, may be aggrandized with the arms of nobility.

Frank. When titles are conferred as the rewards of virtue, they are accompanied with reſpect and honour; but, when bartered to anſwer purpoſes repugnant to their inſtitution, they become the blazoned enſigns of reproach and infamy.

Woud, Give, and take, ſays the old adage, is fair play. In the management of your affairs, pray when was my opinion conſulted.

Frank. This extraordinary perverſeneſs, brother——

Woud. Proclaims me to have an opinion of my own; which, as it does not promote a favorite ſcheme of yours, you are pleaſed to reprobate. Look'e, Mr. Frankly, I think I have numbered ſufficient

ſufficient years, not to require the interpoſition of a court of Chancery, in the appointment of a guardian.

Frank. The errors of youth, with ſeaſonable admonition, are eaſily ſubdued; but obſtinacy in old age, I fear, is never to be conquered.

Song, by Frankly.

To control in a caſe like this,
Is what I proteſt,
I abhor and deteſt,
It never can centre in bliſs.

II.

When diſcretion approves the choice,
I pronounce it a ſhame,
And the party to blame,
Who perverſely refuſes his voice. [*Exit.*

Woud. With how much complacency do ſome men ſubmit to the vaſſalage of choler; ſuch a character is my brother. How dexterouſly he endeavours to acquire the reputation of meek and gentle, when every action of his life proclaims him the ſlave of paſſion. Well, happy are thoſe in whoſe compoſition is the milk of mildneſs. Had Frankly tempered moderation with argument, I had melted like tender hearted charity at the tears of affliction.

Song.

Song, by Woudbe.

Paſſion is ally'd to madneſs,
And the firſt-born ſon of rage;
'Tis the fire of grief and ſadneſs,
Known to all of every age.

II.

Reaſon and deliberation,
With complacency combin'd,
Temper'd with ſweet moderation,
Calm the tumult of the mind. [*Exit.*

Enter Matilda and Agnes.

Agn. I hope, madam, you have no intention to marry Mr. Baſil; the very apprehenſion terrifies me to death.

Mat. Suffer no anxiety on that account; for, tho' I think I am reſolved never to diſpoſe of myſelf without my father's conſent, yet that does not by any means imply, I will ſubmit to marry againſt my own. In this letter Mr. Morley informs me, that his couſin the lord Bruton, is given over by the phyſicians; a circumſtance which much alarms me.

Agn. Why ſo, Madam?

Mat. The honours and eſtate of that nobleman, upon his lordſhip's death, deſcend to Mr. Morley; now what certainty is there, when the event ſhall take place, it will not effect a revolution, in his mind and inclination.

Song

Song, by Matilda.

The frowns of fortune I could bear,
Without a ſigh, or trickling tear;
But who can bear a wounded heart,
Without complaint, and feel the ſmart?

II.

Then ceaſe, dear youth, oh ceaſe to woo,
Unleſs like mine your love be true
Leave me, ah leave me, ere I find
The thorn of anguiſh in the mind.

Agn. If the eyes, madam, are the index to the heart, you cannot have better ſecurity: Beſide, Madam, Mr. Conrad, (who would not defile his mouth with a falſehood) has given me a thouſand evidences of Mr. Morley's ſincerity. — The beſt way, madam, to acquire the true character of a man of faſhion, is to conſult the conduct of his ſervants, who in general are no imperfect copies of their maſter.

Mat. From which you draw this favourable concluſion of Mr. Morley; your partiality to Conrad regulates your opinion of his maſter.

Agn. My partiality to Mr. Conrad, madam, is the effect of his concern for you; for I cannot but eſteem thoſe who are intereſted in your happineſs.

Mat. My uncle's viſit to Southampton is upon this buſineſs: He feels my ſituation and pities me.

Agn. Heaven grant it may prove ſucceſsful! A friend to the conſtitution to be guilty of ſuch a breach of privilege, brings patriotiſm in queſtion, and almoſt ſtamps it chimerical.

Mat. While I retire to my cloſet, to prepare an anſwer to Mr. Morley, be you obſervant of my father; he is of late become ſo very ſuſpicious, it requires more than ordinary vigilance to elude him.

Song, by Matilda.

O had kind fate ordain'd my lot
Among the rural throng;
Contented in my humble cot,
My days had paſs'd along:

II.

Unnotic'd by the rich or great,
Had liv'd ſecure at eaſe;
Some honeſt ruſtic for my mate,
With mutual will to pleaſe. [*Exit.*

Agn. Poor young lady! agitated between hope and fear, how diſtreſſing her ſituation!

Song, by Agnes.

Let the anchoret teach,
And endeavour to find
What is out of his reach,
While diſtemper'd in mind:

Or

Or let the grave ſages,
  Well vers'd in the ſchools,
Preſcribe their dull pages,
  Their maxims and rules.

II.

Their the'ry is uſeleſs,
  They practice in vain,
Their wiſdom is fruitleſs,
  Their labour but pain.
From experience, the beſt
  Of inſtructors, we find,
That the heart knows no reſt
  Till there's peace in the mind. [*Exit.*

Scene, a Garden.

Enter Mr. Morley.

Mor. If an honourable purſuit is accompanied with ſo many pleaſing ſenſations, what inexpreſſible felicity muſt he experience, that is in poſſeſſion of a truly amiable woman, who, while ſhe is prudently ſolicitous to give Nature every neceſſary accompliſhment, is induſtriouſly careful to improve the more important concerns of the mind.

Song, by Morley.

Let libertines boaſt of the bliſs they enjoy,
I envy them not, ſince their tranſports ſoon cloy;
Give me thoſe rich comforts, the pleaſures of life,
Which flow from that fountain of virtue, a wife.

II.

The bacchanal quaffs his full bumpers of wine,
And the rake ſwears his Chloe is ſomething divine;
But paſſions not guided by reaſon are vain,
And as fleeting the tranſport, ſo certain the pain.

Enter Conrad.

Well, Conrad, what news?

Con. Nothing pleaſing, I aſſure you, Sir. I ſuſpected ſomething ominous from the late croaking of the ravens; thoſe diſcordant gentry generally preſage ſome diſaſter. It is now as difficult to obtain admittance into that old Gothic, I was going to ſay, cell of Cerberus, as a man under confinement to facilitate an eſcape; nothing under a bribe will effect the one, and a certain ſum, well applied, is indeed no bad argument for the other. Money, Sir, to men of every denomination, ſpeaks with authority, and hath wonderful properties.

Mor. You found an opportunity to deliver my letter?

Con. Into the hands of the moſt faithful of Abigails. The town's your own, Sir, if the governor has any influence in the garriſon.

Mor. For which, I ſuppoſe, I am indebted to you.

Con. She is a woman of penetration, I aſſure you, Sir. It was in the infancy of your acquaintance

ance with Miſs Woudbe, that Mrs. Agnes firſt experienced the power of love. Mrs. Agnes, you muſt know, Sir, is a great politician, and better read in Dr. Price than any part of the Prayer Book, matrimony excepted: Now, Sir, to humour her phrenzy, and promote your intereſt, I have traced the ſteps of that political writer, and given legality to a cauſe unſupported by law or conſtitution. I was once, Sir, celebrated for my invention, and when I wrote for the papers, was diſtinguiſhed by the name of Paragraph Con. How often have I created a familiarity between perſons who had not the leaſt recollection of each other, and broached a reputation with as little ceremony as a pipe of Madeira. Give me an editor of fertile invention, with courage to be reſolute, and I'll eſtabliſh a newſpaper, in defiance of all the hawkers in Chriſtendom.

Mor. If Mr. Woudbe perſeveres in his reſolution, I ſhall have occaſion for your whole artillery of wit and invention.

Con. In conſtructing a building, two obſervations are neceſſary; to form the deſign, and raiſe the edifice. When you, Sir, have prepared the one, I ſhall be ready to execute the other.

Mor. This extraordinary conduct in Mr. Woudbe, I muſt confeſs, affects me. At our laſt meeting I obſerved an unaccuſtomed coolneſs,

which

which my ſolicitude for his health, aſcribed to indiſpoſition: He indulged the miſtake, and ſuffered me to expreſs myſelf in terms of filial obedience, while he was premeditating my undoing. And muſt Matilda, then, be deſtined to the arms of another? Diſtracting thought! it muſt not be; in deſpite of his inflexible reſolution, I'll defeat his deſign, and at the peril of my life reſcue her from his unnatural tyranny.

Song, by Morley.

Inſpir'd by love, I'll take the field,
And meet th' advent'rous foe;
Love is the helmet and the ſhield,
To ward the deſtin'd blow.

II.

In beauty's cauſe I dare be bold,
And brave th' imbattled hoſt;
Nor ſhall my life be cheaply ſold,
If victory be loſt. [*Exit.*

End of the Firſt Act.

ACT II.

Scene, a Room.

Woudbe and Frankly diſcovered at a table, with a bottle and glaſſes.

Woud. Well, brother, in conformity to your advice, and to convince you my ear is ever attentive to the voice of reaſon, I will ſuſpend my reſolution.

Frank. Suſpend your reſolution? Diſmiſs that incongruous expreſſion, with as little ceremony as you would a refractory ſervant, and let your reſolution be abſolute.

Woud. I muſt confeſs, the conduct of my girl hath been ſuch, that the moſt inquiſitive eye could never trace the leaſt impropriety in it. It ſhall be ſo; ſatisfied ſhe will not diſpoſe of herſelf without my conſent, I engage never to marry her againſt her own.

Frank. By ſuch determination you reſtore tranquility to your family, and pleaſure to your friends. My fortune, which by care and induſtry, is become conſiderable, will in all probability be hers; for I think in the wane of life a huſband is an improper character, for a firſt appearance: What may be prudent in youth, is unpardonable in grey hairs.

Woud.

Woud. From this hour be all reſtraint removed; The air, againſt which my impenetrable doors have been ſtrongly barricaded, ſhall have free circulation, and Matilda be once more at liberty to receive the viſits of thoſe, whom pleaſure or indiſpoſition, may bring to Southampton.

Song, by Woudbe.

Away with every needleſs fear,
Anxious thought, diſtreſſing care;
Bars and bolts no more ſhall be
Emblems of my tyranny.

II.

Reaſon ſhall reſume her place,
And pleaſure beam in every face;
Bars and bolts no more ſhall be
Emblems of my tyranny.

III.

Green ey'd jealouſy no more
Shall clap a padlock on my door:
Bars and bolts no more ſhall be
Emblems of my tyranny.

IV.

Charge with generous wine your glaſs,
A toaſt to freedom let it paſs.
From this hour my houſe ſhall be
Diſtinguiſh'd for its liberty.

Frank.

Frank. A very excellent ſong, truly.

Woud. From a bad ſinger.

Frank. Not ſo, upon honour. I will not compliment you with the taſte and judgment of Squalini, but to atone for that deficiency, you have a capital advantage.

Woud. Indeed? What's that?

Frank. You ſing to be underſtood. A fine voice, I confeſs to be pleaſing; but ſenſe with ſound is moſt agreeable to an Engliſh ear.

Enter Servant.

Ser. A gentleman who calls himſelf Williams, deſires to ſpeak with you. [*To Woudbe.*

Woud. Shew him into the next room: The alteration in my intention renders his viſit unneceſſary. [*Exit.*

Frank. From the favourable attention paid to my arguments, I entertain a pleaſing hope, that a buſineſs which appeared ſo replete with miſchief, will terminate to the ſatisfaction of every party. And now to Matilda, who doubtleſs is impatient to know the ſucceſs of my negociation. [*Exit.*

Scene, a Grove: Conrad diſcovered in it.

Enter Agnes.

Agn. Your humble ſervant, Mr. Conrad.

Con. Upon my ſoul, Mrs. Agnes this want of punctuality is unpardonable. What apology can

you poſſibly make, for expoſing this delicate perſon of mine, to the intemperance of the weather.

Agn. Such as will make your maſters' heart leap with joy.

Con. Really? What, is the old fellow dead? has he in a fit of deſpair of being able to accompliſh his deſign, done us the favour to ſhorten his own life?

Agn. You are too licentious, Mr. Conrad: What do you think Miſs Matilda would ſay, if ſhe knew I encouraged a man with ſuch looſe principles.

Con. Commend you for your choice.—Men of looſe principles are the reigning favourites with the ladies. Who do you imagine ſupply that heaven-born charity, the Magdalen, with votaries, and keep up a conſtant ſucceſſion, but men of looſe principles? It is they who are the beſt friends to the Inſtitution; for what opportunity would the Public have to diſplay their benevolence, if there were no objects to partake of it?

Agn. Fye upon you! I proteſt you have the very air and deportment of a ſeducer.

Con. And pray, child, who taught you experience? But to buſineſs. To what kind ſtar are we indebted for this revolution?

Agn. To the author of a late Treatiſe, who maintains on conſtitutional principles the illegality

of

of imprisonment. No one can write so pathetical in defence of liberty, as he who knows the want of it.

Con. I understand you; now in my apprehension it will have a contrary effect.

Agn. Why so?

Con. While the embargo continued we had only to combat with the attention of an old man, whose vigilance was often defeated; and a young one who was generally too drunk to have any vigilance at all. Now a fresh cargo of Irish fortune hunters, half pay officers, and macaronies without number, will infest the house, and become as troublesome as sleep to a miser when he dreams of thieves.—One kiss, and I am gone.

Agn. What, without your credentials?

Con. I am in possession of them already.

Agn. Those were private instructions; but this, [*Gives a letter.*] explains the business: And now let love and duty wing your expedition. [*Exit Con.*

Song, by Agnes.

What are titles? what is wealth?
What the sweets of blooming health?
What is all the world to me?
Nothing, without Liberty.

II.

Now at large with rapture I
On the wings of Freedom fly;
To thy ſcepter bend my knee,
Smiling goddeſs, Liberty. [*Exit.*

Scene, a Room.

Enter Mr. Morley.

Mor. How rapid is time in the apprehenſion of one ſentenced to an ignominious exit; but to him who is all impatience, waiting on the torture of expectation, with what a ſlow and ſnail pace ſtep he aſcends the laboured hill. My mind, with reſpect to Matilda, knows no ſtability; Sometimes I meditate to try by gentle means to win her Father to compliance; and then my reſolution fails, and leaves me in ſuſpence. One moment I indulge the pleaſures of imagination, and in love's fold embrace the rapturous maid; then ſink into a vaſt abyſs of thought, and find an aching void.

Song, by Morley.

The tulip and the bluſhing roſe,
The young narciſſus fair,
With every flow'r that Nature blows,
To deck the rich parterre;

II.

In vernal gay attire array'd,
They boaſt of no compeer;
But ſoon their fragrant beauties fade,
When brighter charms appear.

Enter Conrad.

Mor. Well, Conrad? what intelligence.

Con. From the information of Mrs. Agnes, I learn Sir, the inſtability of human nature; and that Mr. Woudbe in his reſolutions, is as little to be depended upon, as the plea of contrition to an inexorable judge. But this, Sir, [*Gives a letter.*] unfolds the buſineſs. [*Exit.*

Mor. [*Reads.*] This indulgence given to Matilda, though it may poſſibly inconvenience her to many impertinent addreſſes, may introduce ſome valuable and commendable characters; well, and for the ſake of argument, ſuppoſe it ſhould, what have I to fear? Have I not every aſſurance of the ſincerity of her paſſion? Has ſhe not given me a thouſand teſtimonies of the immutability of her affection? Why then do I ſuffer an intruding thought? Suſpicion is a breach in friendſhip, a gangrene in the mind, againſt which the ſons of Galen, and Hippocrates, have no ſpecific.

Song.

Song, by Mor'ey.

The fickle fair, ſo prone to change,
Own no reſtraining pow'r;
But like the roving bee to range,
And ſip from every flow'r,

II.

Not ſo the maid by virtue taught,
Who honour makes her guide;
Content with one, nor ſuffers aught
Her friendſhip to divide. [*Exit.*

Scene, a Room.

Enter Matilda, and Agnes.

Mat. You have ſeen Conrad, and diſpatched him with the letter?

Agn. Yes, madam; before this it is in the poſſeſſion of Mr. Morley.

Mat. Had my father perſevered in his cruel reſolution, life or death had been equally indifferent to me.

Agn. Bleſs me, madam, a carriage is arrived; and by the extraordinary complaiſance of Thomas, the gentleman ſhould be a ſtranger. That fellow is ever in the extreme; the leaſt proſpect of advantage, makes his civility troubleſome; but when he ſuſpects he is to have only his labour for his pains, his impertinence is unſufferable.

Mat. Go, and inform yourſelf who it is.

[*Exit Agnes.*

Song,

Song, by Matilda.

The dungeon ſlave, obſcur'd from light,
A double horror finds;
Inclos'd in one perpetual night,
His terror ſtronger binds.

II.

But when a dawn of hope he ſees,
From mercy's fountain flow,
Elate with joy, he by degrees
Forgets his former woe.

Enter O'Donnavan.

O'Don. On the wings of a flying poſt coach, I'm ſafely landed, to contemplate the charms, of the dear lovely creature, whoſe delicate face is ſo overſhadowed with beauty, I am not able to diſtinguiſh a feature in it. This letter, madam, [*Gives a letter.*] would have been here before me, to have announced my arrival; but the meſſenger, not accuſtomed to travel on any animal but a wooden one, has found a misfortune.

Mat. Not dead, Sir, I hope?

O'Don. Upon my word, but you foil me. The poor fellow, (an honeſt Calidonian) being aſked the queſtion, anſwered in the negative. You ſmile: Indeed madam, it is a little extraordinary; but, upon my honour, I am doubtful whether he was clear in that particular or not, for it is cuſtomary

mary with the people of this country, to be better acquainted with the concerns of others than their own.

Mat. I ſhould apprehend his own evidence ſufficient.

O'Don. Good, madam; but is it always the faſhion in England to ſpeak the truth? I thought that only appertained to the gentlemen of Ireland, with whom to be guilty of telling the truth, is as natural as to raiſe potatoes in a hot bed.

Mat. By this letter, I find, Sir, your name is O'Donavan.

O'Don. To be ſure it is; it has been in the family almoſt as long as the family itſelf. But I believe the letter writes more than my name.

Enter Woudbe.

Mat. My father, Sir.

O'Don. Sir, I kiſs your hand. You have, Mr. Woudbe a pretty manſion here, and the furniture the beſt in the county.

Woud. Rather ancient, Sir, it has been in the family many years, and I revere it for its anti-quity.

O'Don. Do you call this, [*Taking Matilda by the hand.*] a piece of antiquity. By my faith it is almoſt as modern as lord Vintage's peerage.

Wod. Sir, you're pleaſant; I admire wit, when circumſcrib'd within the bounds of decency, and decorum.

O'Don.

O'Don. Sir, I reſpect your notions, and eſteem that ſagacity which comprehends the meaning of words before they are ſpoken; for in converſation it ſaves much talking. This letter, [*Gives a letter.*] Mr. Woudbe, will give you a circumſtantial detail of my journey, and when you perfectly underſtand it, I will explain it more fully.

Woud. Do you purpoſe, Sir, making any ſtay at Southampton?

O'Don. I purpoſe ſtaying as long as I'm here, and poſſibly a little longer. The diverſions, Mr. Woudbe are very entertaining; bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and cudgel playing, are very polite, and rational amuſements.

Woud. And if you are fond of the more refin'd entertainments.

O'Don. What, the dear creatures the ladies.

Woud. No Sir, card-playing, ſinging, dancing, and a thouſand other diverſions.

O'Don. Sir, I have ſome ſmall acquaintance with the polite arts, (to be ſure I don't mean cards and dice,) [*Aſide.*] and with your permiſſion, I will give you a ſpecimen of an extempore air, juſt written upon this lady.

Woud. Written, where Sir?

O'Don. In my brain to be ſure; the performance of the pen and ink is only a tranſcript. You'll excuſe, Mr. Woudbe, the defects of the voice, for as there are few ſingers, who are able

to write what they ſing, ſo there are very few Authors that are able to ſing what they write.

Song, by O'Donnavan.

I never am happy but when I'm away,
Which makes me dear charmer ſo eager to ſtay;
Then ſmile a ſoft frown, my ſweet little creature,
And ſhew me your love by each face in your feature

II.

My heart heaves for joy, you may ſee by my tears,
And my valour I prove by my frights and my fears;
Then let your ſmall tongue in loud raptures proclaim
The paſſion you own, but want courage to name.

And now my dear little creature,—you'll pardon, Mr. Woudbe, my freedom of ſpeech; but it is uſual with the gentlemen of Ireland, to have no meaning in what they ſay, that their words may not give offence. Do you perceive any inclination towards the perſon of O'Donnavan?

Woud. The natural baſhfulneſs that accompanies virtue, lays a reſtraint upon the tongue, and gives to modeſty a pleaſing luſtre. The town that capitulates on the firſt ſummons, betrays a weakneſs in the garriſon, or a preſumption of treachery.

O'Don. Now in my opinion, Mr. Woudbe, it is no bad manœuvre, to take the town firſt, and then ſummon it to ſurrender.

Woud.

Woud. Is a military life, your profeſſion Sir.

O'Don. Indeed but it is; many a life, (to be ſure I don't mean duelling) [*aſide.*] has this little piece of ſteel ſacrificed to the honour of my country.

Woud. Your country is much indebted to your valour: But what a melancholy reflection, that in doing your duty, you have made the widows tears o'erflow their banks, and leave their channels dry.

O'Don. By my faith, Mr. Woudbe, I believe all the tears which have fallen from the eyes of widows, ſince Niobe, might be contained in one half ounce bottle. As a ſoldier, Sir, my country is my mother; and it is the duty of children to be obedient.

Woud. Your idea of duty does honour to your profeſſion, how diſtreſſing it may be to humanity.

O'Don. In the pedigree of the O'Donavans, you will not find the bluſh of ſhame upon the cheek of any. For the preſent, Sir, I take my leave, and at our next meeting, (which will be never at all) (*aſide.*] You ſhall have farther ſatisfaction; 'till then, Mr. Woudbe, I am yours in part, and yours, madam, altogether. [*Exit.*

Woud. Well, my dear, how do you like the captain?

Mat. As I do my ſquirrel, and for the ſame

reaſon. In a ſolitary hour, he creates laughter, and ſerves as an antidote to the ſpleen.

Enter Servant.

Ser. Sir, a gentleman who calls himſelf Jingle, deſires to ſpeak with you.

Woud. Shew him in. [*Exit Servant.*

Enter Jingle.

Jin. Mr. Woudbe, your ſervant, Sir: With the extaſy of one juſt recovered from ſickneſs, after being pronounced by thoſe wiſe judges of events, poſitively incurable, I kiſs your hand. Your daughter, Sir, I preſume, [*pointing to Mat.*] Madam, with the veneration due to a ſeraphim veiled in mortality, I bow ſubmiſſive. The beauties of your perſon, and the accompliſhments of your mind, are the univerſal topics of all polite circles.

Woud. Sir, my daughter is obliged to thoſe polite circles for their favourable opinion; as to her perſon, it is as Nature faſhioned it, no art hath hitherto been uſed to deface and ſpoil it. I remember when it was the practice with ladies, to whom Nature had not been very liberal, to ſupply the defect with ſuch dexterity, that the hand of the artiſt could ſcarcely be traced. But with our modern beauties it is otherwiſe, and the contention is not who ſhall bear the greateſt, but the leaſt reſemblance to Nature.

Jin.

Jin. Beauty, Sir, is a ſubject, and a very fine ſubject, upon honour; But as much under the dominion of faſhion, as the cloaths we wear. Now, Sir, as Art is the handmaid to Taſte, does it not follow, as certain as envy doth ſuperior merit, that Nature robed in no other veſtment than her own production, is a compoſition of heterogeneous matter, conſtituting one groſs matetiality of deformity?

Woud. To purſue the metaphor; I admit ſome allowance may be made for particular characters, but what opinion would you entertain of one, who ſhould deface a room ornamented with beautiful tapeſtry, with paper, not ſufficiently decent for the temple of Cloacina?

Jin. Faſhion, Sir, juſtifies the propriety of actions, and reconciles them to reaſon. I have known the time, when a double entendre might be delivered from the ſtage, and create a riſibility in the features of a chaſte and polite audience: but tempora, mutantur! the times are changed, and the faſhions ſo alter'd, that a lady of eaſy virtue, or no virtue at all, will almoſt expire at a ſpeeeh, that does not contain as much morality as Tillotſon's ſermons.

Woud. And yet the practice of virtue——

Jin. Like every thing elſe, is in ſubjection to faſhion. My lord Totter is a pregnant inſtance,

and

and as ſerjeant Plodder rightly obſerves, a caſe in point: Deaf as the law, when culprits ſue for mercy, and feeble as the expiring flame. He is a great advocate for extempore preaching, and keeps his ſeraglio, as elegant furniſhed, as a Baſhaw of three tails.

Woud. And vice, I ſuppoſe, is alſo regulated by faſhion.

Jin. With us of the ton, we have no ſuch word in our vocabulary.

Woud. No, Sir! then according to your idea, the law was intended only to reſtrain the unruly paſſions of the vulgar.

Jin. For nothing elſe impair my vigour. The canaille, Sir, have no pretenſion to paſſions, appetites, and inclinations; and when they preſume to taſte the forbidden fruit, their offence is death, without the benefit of clergy.

Mat. And is pleaſure under the control of faſhion.

Jin. Indiſputable! For example; can you ſuppoſe that perſons of polite life, viſit the theatre for amuſement?

Mat. Certainly; or to what motive can it be aſcribed.

Jin. To diſturb the attention of thoſe who are pleaſed with ſuch productions. As to the Drama; A TRAGEDY ſhould be baniſhed the Stage, but

that

that under particular circumſtances it may excite pleaſantry. To ſee a butcher with a face as greaſy as his chopping block, who is perpetually ſurrounded with real ſcenes of diſtreſs, and feels no emotion, pout, nay poſitively blubber, and melt into dripping, at an imaginary; one is very laughable, upon my ſoul; A SENTIMENTAL COMEDY, in a nodding mood, is a ſoperiferous draught; and a PERFORMANCE, that has no other merit then what it derives from the unnatural geſticulations of the players, deſerves execration, by Jupiter. But now, Sir, to buſineſs; the perſonal, and mental perfections of your daughter; have not only reached the hearing of my ear, but contrary to the opinion of ſome theoretical writers, have diſcovered the north-eaſt paſſage to my heart. O, thou bright maid, more fair then Helen, fam'd in grecian ſtory, ſee, at your feet, a wounded captive kneel— [*Kneels.*

Woud. Hold, Sir! chaſte love, like Summer's nurturing ſhow'rs, is mild and gentle; while lawleſs paſſion, like an impetuous ſtorm, unloads the ear, before the grain is ripe, and robs the toiler of his promis'd harveſt.

Jin. Gads curſe the old put, I'll give him the retort. [*Aſide.*] Declining years have loſt the fire of youth, and give to love the term of wild deſire. My paſſion, Sir, is pure; quench not the riſing flame

flame with your denial; but let me now obtain your kind conſent, to pay my homage to you beauteous daughter.

Woud. During your reſidence at Southampton, (for I preſume you are come to take the benefit of bathing) we may have frequent opportunies to converſe upon this ſubject: In the mean time, I muſt ſolicit to be favoured with ſuch information, as may be neceſſary to juſtify my conſent.

Jin. Sir, you are already in poſſeſſion of my name, and if I have any profeſſionary avocation, it is that of a virtuoſo. Now, Sir, if I have the honour to become your ſon in law, by an eſpouſal with this lady, I ſhall be the poſſeſſor of a moſt extraordinary phenomenon, a natural beauty.

Song, by Jingle.

In me behold a lover;
The pointed dart
Hath pierc'd my heart,
Which heaving ſighs diſcover.

II.

I find the ſtrong impreſſion;
The pain I feel
I can't reveal,
It beggars all expreſſion. [*Exit*

Woud.

Woud. Well, Matilda; your opinion of Mr. Jingle?

Mat. That he is an object for ridicule, and deplore, that one to whom Nature has not been unmindful, ſhould be ſo induſtrious to forget himſelf.

Enter Frankly and Morley.

Woud. Mr. Morley, I rejoice to ſee you. Believe me, Sir, your preſence cannot be more acceptable to my daughter, than it is to me.

Mor. Sir, you do me honour; and if, with your permiſſion, and Matilda's choice, I attain the end of my purſuit, every moment of my life, that ſhall not be engaged in promoting her felicity, will be a chaſm in time.

Woud. What ſays Matilda?

Mat. Sir, Mr. Morley is no ſtranger to the deference I have long entertained for his ſuperior merit; and ſince he is aſſured of your conſent, I believe he has no apprehenſion of mine.

Mor. Generous Matilda! How ſhall I convey my acknowledgements?

Woud. By your taciturnity, which often implies more than language can expreſs. Fools and knaves are not wanting in words, when the ingenuous mind is rapt in ſilent gratitude.

Frank. Mr. Morley, I congratulate you on this happy occaſion.

Mor. The language of my tongue is inadequate to expreſs the feelings of my heart: Let my conduct atone for the defects of the one, and confirm the ſincerity of the other.

Woud. In all concerns, eſpecially of importance, how expedient it is to weigh every conſequence in the ſcale of reflection. Was this conſideration more attentively obſerved, how many inconveniences would be avoided. Had I obſtinately perſevered in my intention, and married my daughter to Mr. Baſil, I had ſacrificed happineſs to the ſhrine of folly and ambition; the intervention of my brother having diverted my deſign: I now not only perceive the force of his argument, but when a reſolution is not founded in reaſon, *Second Thought is beſt.*

FINALE.

Morley.

Bleſt in thee, thou lovely fair,
All my doubts and fears are paſt;
Thou alone be all my care,
While the day of life ſhall laſt.

Matilda.

Under thy protecting wing,
Smiling hope and joy appear;
May the beauties of the Spring,
Beam on each revolving year.

Woud.

Woudbe.

May ye bright examples prove,
While ye tread life's buſy ſtage;
Patterns of connubial love,
To a diſſipated age.

Chorus,

Hand and heart unite in love,
Hymen ſmile propitious now;
From thy azure realms above,
Wreath a chaplet for each brow.